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GOLF TEE

The present invention relates to a golf tee, and more particularly, a golf tee that is flexible and one on which a golfer can place a golf ball by rolling the golf ball up on it with a golf club.

There are several prior art golf tees, however, the majority of those golf tees require that the golfer bend over to put a golf ball on the tee. Those that potentially allow the golfer to put a golf ball on the tee have only one path by which the golfer can get the golf ball on the tee. Additionally, the prior art tees cup the ball, potentially taking distance from the golf shots and increasing the wear to the tee, requiring that the tees be replaced more frequently.

Accordingly, the present invention is directed to a golf tee and method for putting a golf ball on a golf tee that substantially obviates one or more of the problems and disadvantages in the prior art. Additional features and advantages of the invention will be set forth in the description that follows, and in part will be apparent from the description, or may be learned by practice of the invention. The objectives and other advantages of the invention will be realized and attained by the apparatus and process particularly pointed out in the written description and claims, as well as the appended drawings.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

To achieve these and other advantages and in accordance with the purpose of the invention as embodied and broadly described herein, the invention is directed to a golf tee including a base, a shaft connected to the base, a top portion connected to the shaft, the top portion further comprising at least three legs connected to the shaft and a web member extending between the at least three legs, the web member being independent from the shaft.

In yet another aspect, the invention is directed to a resilient golf tee including a base, a shaft connected to the base, at least three legs connected to the shaft, and a web member extending between the at least three legs.

In another aspect, the invention is directed to a resilient golf tee including an enlarged base, a shaft connected to the base, and at least three legs connected to the shaft.

In another aspect, the invention provides a method of putting a golf ball on a golf tee, the golf tee having a top portion with at least three legs and a web member extending between the at least three legs, the method including providing the golf ball, aligning the golf ball between two of the three legs, and using a golf club to push the golf ball against the web member between the two legs causing the golf ball to roll up over the web member and rest on the three legs.

In yet another aspect, the invention provides for a method of putting a golf ball on a golf tee, the golf tee having an enlarged base, a shaft connected to the base, and a top portion with connected to the shaft and having at least three legs, the method

including providing the golf ball, aligning the golf ball between two of the three legs, and using a golf club to push the golf ball against the tee between two of the at least three legs causing the golf ball to roll up over the web member and rest on the three legs.

It is to be understood that the foregoing general description and the following detailed description are exemplary and explanatory and are intended to provide further explanation of the invention as claimed.

The accompanying drawings are included to provide a further understanding of the invention and are incorporated in and constitute a part of the specification. The drawings illustrate several embodiments of the invention and together with the description serve to explain the principles of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a perspective of one embodiment of a golf tee according to the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a front view of the golf tee in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a top view of the golf tee in Fig. 1;

Fig 4 is a cross section view of the golf tee of Fig. 3 along the line 4-4 and illustrating a golf mat that may be used with the golf tee;

Fig. 5 is a cross section view of the golf tee of Fig. 2 along the line 5-5;

Fig. 6 is a perspective of another embodiment of a golf tee according to the present invention;

Fig. 7 is a perspective of a third embodiment of a golf tee according to the present invention;

Fig. 8 illustrates a golf ball placed in preparation to be rolled on to the golf tee of Fig. 1 with the golf ball and mat in phantom;

Fig. 9 illustrates the golf ball (in phantom) moving up the web member between two legs of the golf tee and shortly before coming to rest on the golf tee; and

Fig. 10 illustrates a golf ball in phantom on the golf tee of Fig. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

A golf tee **10** according to the present invention is shown in Fig. 1. The golf tee **10** preferably has an enlarged base **12** from which a shaft **14** extends. The shaft **14** is divided into an upper portion **16** and a lower portion **18**. See also Fig. 2. The upper portion **16** preferably has upper shaft extensions **20**, with slots **22** between the shaft extensions **20**. The upper shaft extensions **20** and the slots **22** allow the golf tee **10** to flex and deform during play and installation, which is described in more detail below.

Golf tee **10** also has a top portion **26** on which the golf ball sits. The top portion **26** includes three legs **28** which are connected to the upper shaft extensions **20** by ribs or gussets **30**. Fig. 3. The top portion **26** also has a web member **32** that extends between the legs **28**. In the illustrated embodiment, the top portion **26** has three web members **32** connecting the three legs **28**. The web member **32** is not directly attached to the shaft **14**, but to the legs **28**.

The top portion **26** can be deformed to fit through a hole **34** in a practice mat **36**, as seen in Fig. 4. The top portion **26** is pushed together and pushed through the hole **34** in the bottom of the mat **36**, where the base **12** engages the bottom of the mat **36**. The shaft **14** extends at least through the mat **36** as shown in Fig. 4, but may extend further (either by a longer shaft **14** or a thinner mat **36**) so that there is a gap **38** that may be larger than the one shown.

The slots **22** and upper shaft extensions **20**, along with the web members **32** cooperate to allow the top portion to be collapsed to fit within the hole **34**, but also maintain the integrity of the golf tee **10**. The web members **32** assist in providing stability to the legs **28** and the shaft **14**, including the upper shaft portion **16**. As shown in Fig. 10, the golf ball (shown in phantom) is supported only by a small portion of the legs **28**. The web member **32** assists in not allowing the legs **28** to flare outward so that the ball falls within the legs **28**. If this were to happen, it would be more difficult to hit the ball from within the legs, the golf tee would be subject to more abuse and would not last as long. If the legs **28** were not flexible at all, then the ball may not stay on the tee and fall off. It should be noted, however, that if the legs **28** of the golf tee were of a sufficient thickness or stiffness (depending on the material), the web member **32** would not be necessary and still allow the appropriate amount of flexing of the legs.

Fig. 6 shows a second embodiment of a golf tee **40** according to the present invention. As with the first embodiment, the golf tee **40** has a base **42**, a shaft **44**, and legs **46**. In this embodiment, the shaft **44** has a lower portion **48**, and an upper portion

50 with three shaft extensions **52** and corresponding slots **53**. This golf tee **40** is also capable of being collapsed to fit through a golf mat as with the previous embodiment. In fact, this embodiment of a golf tee **40** does not need a lower portion **48** if so desired and the shaft **44** could be three separate shaft extensions **52**, which is also applicable to golf tee **10** above. The legs **46** of golf tee **40** are shown to be cylindrical with a blunt end **54**. However, the legs **46** could be configured similar to legs **28**, i.e., have a taper at the end. In this embodiment, a web member is not necessary due to the strength and thickness of the legs **46**. Again, a web member could be used is so desired.

Fig. 7 shows a third embodiment of a golf tee **60** according to the present invention. Golf tee **60** is similar to golf tee **40** in that it has a base **62**, a shaft **64**, and four legs **64**, rather than three legs. The shaft **66** also has a lower portion **68** and an upper portion **70** with four (rather than three legs **64**). Again, no web member is present in this embodiment although one could be added.

The golf tees **10,40,60** are preferably made from a resilient material such as an elastomeric material. The elastomeric material may be natural rubber, synthetic rubber, flexible polyurethane, flexible PVC, thermoplastic elastomers, and latex. The thickness of the legs and the existence of the web members **32** depend on the materials and their resilience and stiffness. As shown in Fig. 10, the legs may flare out slightly to ensure that the golf ball stays in the tee when it is pushed on, during adverse conditions such as high wind, when mounted on an incline, etc. However, the ball should not sink too far down into the tee so that the legs get between the club face

and the ball. If the legs **28** are tapered as shown in Fig. 1, then the legs need not even flex at all since the ball will rest on the inside of the legs.

In order to put a ball on the golf tees **10,40,60**, the golfer rolls a ball (shown in phantom in Fig. 8) between two of the legs **28** and against the web member **32**. The golfer then continues to exert pressure against the ball and it will roll up the web member **32** and along and between the legs **28**. See Fig. 9. The legs **28** may part slightly from the pressure and weight of the ball as shown in Fig. 9. The ball with then come to rest on the top of the legs **28**. Similarly for the embodiments shown in Figs. 6 and 7, the golf ball, not shown, will be aligned between two of the three or four legs **46,64** and as it is pushed toward the tee, it will ride up the legs and may slightly even part the legs, depending on the type and characteristics of the material used. The golf ball with then settle in on the legs **46,64**. Again, Applicants have found that the ball will remain at rest on the legs **46,64** and will not continue over the golf tee to fall off when a resilient material is used.

It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made in the golf tee of the present invention without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention. Thus, it is intended that the present invention cover the modifications and variations of this invention provided they come within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.